

**Response to Questions for the Request for Proposal (RFP) to
Develop a Branding and Marketing Plan for the New Jersey Highlands Region**

Project Understanding and Strategy:

Q: Can you provide insights or learnings from previous initiatives that could guide this branding and marketing project?

A: **This is the first branding/marketing effort the Highlands Council has undertaken.**

Q: What specific KPIs and success metrics do you envision for this branding and marketing

A: **The consultant team should identify appropriate measures of success as the project progresses.**

Q: Which areas within the Highlands Region are currently under-visited and would benefit

A: **We do not have that information. We anticipate that the entire Highlands Region will benefit from this branding/marketing effort.**

Q: How do you envision the brand identity incorporating the diverse types of tourism within the Highlands Region? Are there any existing branding elements that should be incorporated or avoided?

A: **The proposal should incorporate all the diverse types of tourism in the Region. The existing tourism initiatives of each of the counties and NJ's Division of Tourism should be considered.**

Q: What are your long-term visions or aspirations for the brand over the next 5-10 years, particularly in terms of adaptability to changing tourism and cultural landscapes?

A: **Anticipate increased awareness and identification with the Highlands brands.**

Q: Do you have a list of trade shows you are already attending, or are you looking for vendors to propose trade shows?

A: **Do not currently attend trade shows.**

Q: Do you have any existing data on markets you would like to target? If so, can this be shared?

A: **There is some data available in the Economic Sustainability Plan. The link is provided in the RFP.**

Q: How many agencies are participating in the RFP?

A: **The Highlands Council is the only agency soliciting proposals; however, we anticipate stakeholder involvement from other government entities, including our County partners.**

Q: Is there an incumbent agency participating in the RFP?

**Response to Questions for the Request for Proposal (RFP) to
Develop a Branding and Marketing Plan for the New Jersey Highlands Region**

A: **No**

Q: How many agencies will be invited to present?

A: **It depends on the quality of their proposal and the number of responses received.**

Q: Do you have a budget in mind for your long-term advertising and outreach strategies that we should be aware of?

A: **No**

Q: Who will the agency be directly working with internally, and how will decisions pertaining to the brand be made?

A: **The Highlands Council will direct the project and our stakeholder team will be involved in decision making.**

Q: Is there an internal marketing team to assist in the execution of the strategy?

A: **Not currently. Our County partners may take on some of this responsibility.**

Q: How much does the organization understand the brand? (i.e., if 0 = brand is seen as just logo and 10 = an appreciation that brand equals culture and experience)

A: **The Highlands Council understands a brand is much more than a logo. We understand who we are and our mission, the job of the consultant is to translate that into a meaningful brand.**

Q: Approximately how many internal stakeholders will we need to interview to gain a representative perspective across the geographies and organizations, horizontally and vertically?

A: **The Highlands Council and our County partners will be the internal stakeholders.**

Q: What is the current equity in the Highlands brand and its portfolio of brands/organizations? Is anything sacrosanct?

A: **We don't currently have a tourism brand.**

Q: How change-ready is the organization? (i.e., if 0 = not ready at all 10 = primed and ready)

A: **We are very interested in advancing the mission of our organization and are looking to the branding/marketing effort as a key tool.**

Budget and Resources:

A: What is the total budget allocated for the branding and marketing plan, exclusive of ad spend, and what are the priority areas within this budget?

**Response to Questions for the Request for Proposal (RFP) to
Develop a Branding and Marketing Plan for the New Jersey Highlands Region**

Q: The anticipated budget is \$200,000, although we encourage interested teams to call to our attention any aspects of the RFP that may be particularly expensive and may need to wait until a later time.

Q: Could you provide specifics on the ad spend allocation for this project?

A: Expect the consultant to make recommendations regarding these specifics.

Q: How do you recommend allocating the budget among the various components of the project?

A: The allocation of the budget is best determined by the team as you develop your proposal.

Submission and Compliance:

Q: Is an electronic submission of the proposal sufficient, or is a physical submission required? Clarify that the physical submission is only for the Cost Proposal, Rate Schedule & Budget component of the RFP. If physical is required, please confirm how many copies and the exact address to deliver, and if mailing or courier is accepted.

A: Electronic submission is satisfactory.

Q: Are there specific sensitive issues or recent community sentiment changes in the Highlands Region that should be considered in our proposal?

A: No

Q: What are the current initiatives or policies regarding supplier diversity and inclusion within the Highlands Council?

A: The Highlands Council has no current initiatives related to marketing in the region.

Q: Could you outline the composition of the decision-making panel for this RFP and their roles in the selection process?

A: Highlands Council staff and several members of our County Coalition will review the proposals and potentially conduct interviews with the various teams.

Q: RFP Section IV.A.11 asks the consultant to provide details of projects of substantially similar nature. We understand this to mean a competing community, perhaps nearby. Can you elaborate on how you define a substantially similar project?

A: The project envisioned by this RFP is fairly broad, covering tourism, the agriculture industry, as well as environmentally sensitive landscapes. Any relevant experience in these areas and particularly addressing more than one would be helpful.

**Response to Questions for the Request for Proposal (RFP) to
Develop a Branding and Marketing Plan for the New Jersey Highlands Region**

Q: Regarding RFP Section IV.A.13, may we obtain a New Jersey business upon award, or must we have a business license--or be in the process of applying for a license--at the time of proposal submission?

A: **You must have the license at the time of submittal.**

Q: Could you let us know if you have a local preference or are you open to a Canadian agency that has done similar work with clients across the United States, with some currently being the States of California, Colorado and Wyoming?

A: **You must be a registered NJ Business in order to bid on this Contract.**

Marketing and Public Relations:

Q: How do you envision the integration of digital marketing and PR activities in this campaign, and how do they relate to each other?

A: **These recommendations should be developed by the team as you prepare your proposal and may be refined during the course of the project.**

Q: What strategies are currently in place for channel integration and optimizing algorithm performance in your marketing efforts?

A: **N/A**

Q: What is the expected role of public relations in managing the Highlands Region's brand reputation, and what are your expectations for crisis management and community engagement?

A: **Anticipate recommendations related to future public relations as part of the marketing effort. Community engagement is a critical component of the overall effort.**

Q: Does the RFP include specific goals or expectations regarding supplier diversity in the implementation of the branding and marketing plan?

A: **No**

Q: How does the RFP address visitor diversity in its marketing objectives, and what are the expectations for reflecting this diversity in the branding strategy?

A: **The RFP anticipates a broad visitor diversity from local, to the larger metropolitan areas of NYC and Philadelphia, and beyond.**

Q: How would you categorize and prioritize your audiences (customer segments, employees, influencers, etc.)?

A: **We have not done any categorization specifically related to tourism.**

**Response to Questions for the Request for Proposal (RFP) to
Develop a Branding and Marketing Plan for the New Jersey Highlands Region**

Q: How will your target audiences change as a result of your future growth plans?

A: **This will be determined through the efforts of the project.**

Q: What do you see as your current (biggest) challenge and opportunity?

A: **The general public, local and afar, does not know who/what the Highlands Region is and therefore do not understand its value.**

Q: What's the most important channel/way to get your message out? How do you currently market?

A: **We do not currently have any tourism marketing.**

Q: How effective have efforts been?

A: **N/A**

Q: What's in your current marketing mix? What's working best?

A: **N/A**

Q: Are there any existing marketing campaigns, promotions, or past initiatives from which learnings can be gleaned?

A: **N/A**

Q: What is the scope of the go-to-market strategy? Focus on key audiences or limited geographies? –

A: **Focus on both local, larger metropolitan areas (NYC and Philadelphia), and much further afield.**

Q: As one of the deliverables for Marketing Materials, you've included "a tourism/marketing website." does that mean you want us to include scope to build a new website for a New Jersey Highlands Region or just revise and update your current page?

A: **There is no existing tourism or marketing website.**

Q: How much new content creation should we consider?

A: **That will be determined during the work of this project.**

Q: Would you want to factor in converting any existing downloadable documents to a new look and feel to match the website?

A: **N/A**

Response to Questions for the Request for Proposal (RFP) to Develop a Branding and Marketing Plan for the New Jersey Highlands Region

Q: Would you like us to include a maintenance budget for site updates?

A: **That may be appropriate.**

Q: Do you intend to maintain the content of the website yourself, or do you need support for this?

A: **Would like to know all the reasonable options.**

Q: Could you provide additional details, such as how much collateral and what kind you would like us to produce?

A: **We expect this will be determined during the course of the project.**

Q: Should we assume a minimum duration of 12 months for the post-launch support agreement? –

A: **That would be fine, although if a different time period appears better suited to our needs, please feel free to make a suggestion.**

Q: Do you need support in creating content for your electronic communications, or are you primarily looking for design and development work to create templates that would enable you to send and manage everything yourself?

A: **We would appreciate input regarding all reasonable options.**

Demographics and Seasonal Variations:

Q: Could you provide a detailed breakdown of the target demographics for the Highlands Region's marketing efforts?

A: **The RFP anticipates a broad visitor diversity from local, to the larger metropolitan areas of NYC and Philadelphia, and beyond. Some demographics may be drawn from the Economic Sustainability Plan. The link is provided in the RFP.**

Q: How do visitor demographics and interests shift across different seasons in the Highlands Region?

A: **Do not know.**

Q: What are the peak seasons for visitation in the Highlands, including any regional variations?

A: **Do not know.**

Design and Development:

Q: Are you seeking a complete redesign and development of a new website, or an update and rebranding of the existing site, and what specific features or functionalities are desired?

**Response to Questions for the Request for Proposal (RFP) to
Develop a Branding and Marketing Plan for the New Jersey Highlands Region**

A: The Highlands Council does not currently have a tourism website. Our current website is focused primarily on our responsibility as a regional planning agency.

Q: Is there a vision for custom branding for specific sub-groups within the Highlands, or a preference for a general branding template that accommodates existing logos and assets?

A: It is anticipated that a broad general brand will be developed as a key deliverable of this project. It is expected to be applicable as an umbrella for existing brands and themes currently in use by our county partners.

Q: Could you provide specific examples of current tourism materials from the Highlands Region, including those related to local businesses, sub-regional brands, or other entities, and detail how these materials should align or integrate with the new branding initiative? Additionally, how should the new brand harmonize with these existing sub-brands while maintaining a cohesive identity for the Highlands Region?

A: As noted above, it is anticipated that the brand that results from this project will be beneficial to the existing brands currently in operation. See the initiatives of the 7-county region.

Q: Would you be interested in reviewing conceptual visual samples to understand our creative approach better?

A: Yes.

Q: Task A, Deliverable D: Is the license agreement to be provided by the creative vendor, or do you need the creative vendor to sign a license agreement provided by the Highlands Council?

A: If a license agreement is needed, the consultant would be expected to provide input on its specifics.

Q: RFP Section III.A.d under Brand Identification mentions the development of a license agreement. We assume you mean transferring usage rights of the brand and advising on trademark potential. Could you elaborate on this requirement to provide clarity?

A: The consultant is expected to assist the Highlands Council to address future usage rights.

Q: RFP Section III.B.b.a mentions a tourism/marketing website. Is this deliverable referring to concept images of website design, graphic assets to put on a website, or the design, hosting, and programming of a new/updated website? If it is the latter, may we seek the partnership of a tourism website design firm to assist in this deliverable?

A: Although the Highlands Council does not currently have a tourism website, we would like the consultant to assist in making critical decisions about how we would approach one in the future, as well as a timeframe for when that may be appropriate.

**Response to Questions for the Request for Proposal (RFP) to
Develop a Branding and Marketing Plan for the New Jersey Highlands Region**

Q: Is there a current brand strategy or past efforts that you can share?

A: **There are no past efforts.**

Q: Are you looking for messaging work as well, or just the high-level story/strategy?

A: **Messaging as well.**

Q: Who are the competitors or peers? Are there any that stand out as examples of best practices?

A: **Do not currently know the answers.**

Q: Do you have any research on your brand equity or stakeholder perceptions?

A: **No**

Q: How many brands are you planning on including in the umbrella?

A: **Each of our county partners have tourism approaches and the State of NJ has a Division of Tourism.**

Q: Do you have existing brand guidelines?

A: **No**

Collaboration and Materials:

Q: Can you elaborate on the expected level of collaboration and interaction between our team and stakeholders such as DMOs, agricultural operations, and other entities, including preferred communication channels or platforms?

A: **There is expected to be a great deal of collaborative effort in developing the branding and marketing deliverables. We anticipate identifying a steering committee to help guide this effort. We expect that communications will be both in-person and digital for our steering committee, our stakeholders, and the general public.**

Q: What are the specific requirements or guidelines for marketing materials to be customizable by local entities while maintaining the core brand's integrity? Are there existing branding guidelines to follow?

A: **These details are expected to be identified as the project progresses.**

Project Management and Evaluation:

Q: What are your preferred mechanisms or formats for testing the reception of the Highlands Brand and evaluating its effectiveness?

**Response to Questions for the Request for Proposal (RFP) to
Develop a Branding and Marketing Plan for the New Jersey Highlands Region**

A: Anticipate these to be identified over the course of the work on the project.

Q: RFP Section III.C.c mentions testing the Highlands Region brand. Do you envision this as consumer testing (previous and potential visitors, residents, etc.) or stakeholder testing (a more defined group of relevant and invested individuals).

A: We anticipate at a minimum testing with our stakeholders.

Q: Could you provide more details on the flexibility of project timeframes, the frequency, and the format of progress reports expected by the Council?

A: The RFP anticipates a 12-month timeframe. We welcome alternate suggestions that meet the overall objectives of the project. Regular communication with the Highlands Council project manager and steering committee will be required.